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ABSTRACT

This paper presents and compares data from the Adaptive Behavior Inventory for Children (ABIC) on three groups of Mexican-American children from California, Austin, and Corpus Christi, Texas. The ABIC is premised on the belief that all behaviors are learned in a particular sociocultural context and that this context must be taken into account when interpreting behaviors. In California and Texas, Mexican American children are the dominant minority group and come from a linguistically and culturally different background. Their own social system has unique properties and often is outside of the Anglo core culture. Since their adaptive behaviors are nurtured and reinforced within their social system, these behaviors need to be interpreted with respect to the norms of their group. (Author)

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Contrasting Localized Norms for Mexican-American Children on the ABIC[1]

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This paper presents and compares data from the Adaptive Behavior Inventory for Children (ABIC) on three groups of Mexican American children: from California, Austin, and Corpus Christi, Texas. The ABIC is premised on the belief that all behaviors are learned in a particularly sociocultural context and that the sociocultural context must be taken into account when interpreting behaviors. In California and Texas, Mexican American children are the dominant minority group and come from a linguistically and culturally different background. Their own social system has unique properties and often is outside of the Anglo core culture. In that their adaptive behaviors are nurtured and are reinforced within their social system, they need to be interpreted with respect to the norms of their group.

Several researchers (Stone & Ruiz, 1971; Karp, Silberman & Winters, 1969; Ramirez, Castaneda & Herold, 1974) have questioned the validity of generalizing results to an entire ethnic group without consideration of their within group differences. Within the Mexican American group, such factors as distance from the Mexican border and economic structure of the community have been identified as variables which differentially effect patterns of acculturation with the Mexican American culture. It is reasonable to expect differences in adaptive behavior between Mexican American groups in California and Texas, and perhaps within Texas itself.

Method

ABIC data from California (N=685), Austin (N=132) and Corpus Christi, Texas (N=140) are examined for significant differences. In addition, Pearson correlations and multiple correlations are compared across groups. The Corpus Christi sample was drawn at random from the school census data of that city; the children range in ages from 5 to 11 years and were selected from all economic groups. Oakland (1977) discusses the Austin sample, and information on the California sample is contained in Mercer's work (1977).

The ABIC and sociocultural modalities of the SOMPA are the instruments used in the study. The ABIC, a measure of adaptive behavior, consists of six subtests (family, peers, community, school, earner-consumer and self-maintenance roles) measuring a child's behavior in these social roles. A total scale score is also computed. The Sociocultural Modalities consist of four areas. Urban Acculturation, SES, Family Size, and Family Structure. The Urban Acculturation modality, the most complex, consists of four factors:

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Anglization, sense of efficacy, community participation and urbanization. The four factors are weighted and summed to yield a score for the modality. All four sociocultural modalities are used in regression equations to estimate children's learning potential.

$\bar{Z}$ tests are used to test for significant differences in group means. This type of analysis is appropriate for measuring significance when samples are large (Guilford and Fruchter, 1973).

Results

ABIC subtest and total scores differ significantly between the California sample and both Texas samples (Table 1). Except for the Peers and Self Maintenance Scales, the mean scores from both Texas cities were significantly lower than those from California. However, there were no significant differences between the Texas cities.

Consistent with the California sample, the Urban Acculturation modality was the best predictor of ABIC total scores for both Austin and Corpus Christi (Table 2). The next best predictor in the Texas data is the SES modality. Family size and family structure do not significantly predict ABIC scores. The overall variance accounted for in each case averaged 10%. The multiple correlations of the sociocultural modalities with the ABIC scores tend to be higher in the Texas samples, with the highest in the Corpus Christi sample.

The intercorrelations (Table 3) of the ABIC subtests and the ABIC total score are roughly equivalent for all three groups. The correlations in the California sample range from .68 to .88, in the Austin sample from .66 to .91, and in the Corpus Christi sample from .51 to .90. The median correlation in the California sample is .80, in the Austin sample .81, and in the Corpus Christi sample .73.

Discussion

The results strongly support the contention that localized (i.e., statewide) norms are necessary in using the ABIC. The fact that Mexican American children from California tend to have higher ABIC scores than those from Texas has important implications for using the ABIC scores as criteria for establishing eligibility for special education programs. If the criteria used in Texas were established on California norms, there would be a tendency to select more Mexican American children for special class placement than if the criteria were established on Texas norms. For this to happen would be antithetical to one of the major purposes of the SOMPA.

In all three groups, peer and self maintenance scores are not significantly different. Thus, patterns of interaction with other children and the ability to take care of oneself are less culture specific and less susceptible to variance due to culture and social class. Differences between California and Texas in family, community, school and economic behaviors suggest that

these are influenced more by regional or cultural factors. These results suggest the need for studies in other geographical areas of the United States. Research with other tests (e.g., the 1916 Binet), standardized heavily upon Californians, has demonstrated the unrepresentative nature of this population. This may be for the SOMPA as well.

The lack of differences in scores between Austin and Corpus Christi is somewhat surprising. While the cities are of similar size, the ethnic make-up and economies of both cities are very different. Austin is the state capitol, site of a major university and numerous light industries. Corpus Christi is much closer to Mexico and claims petrochemicals and shipping as its economic base--an economic base which is lower than Austin's. The majority of the students in Austin are Anglo and in Corpus Christi are Mexican American. In terms of the variables identified as significant in Mexican American acculturation (i.e., proximity to Mexico and economy) Austin and Corpus Christi are different. These apparent differences are not reflected in the ABIC.

The results of this study serve to reinforce the original assumptions upon which the SOMPA is based. There are differences in the sociocultural contexts in which behaviors are learned, in this case between Texas and California. In using the SOMPA to interpret behaviors and make educational decisions, it is important to consider establishing localized (e.g., statewide) norms to be certain that behaviors are evaluated within the proper context.

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TABLE 1

ABIC Scale Score Means and Standard Deviations from California, Austin, and Corpus Christi, Texas

	California (N = 685)		Austin (N = 432)		Corpus Christi (N = 140)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Family	50	15	45	14**	46	13**
Community	47	15	40	17**	37	13**
Peers	47	15	47	14	46	15
School	48	15	45	15*	44	13**
E/C	48	15	43	14**	41	13**
SM	48	15	46	12	48	15
TOTAL	48	15	44	13**	43	12**

* Differs from California at .02 level
** Differs from California at .005 level

TABLE 2

Pearson Correlations and Multiple Correlations Between ABIC Scale Scores and Sociocultural Scales for Spanish Surnamed Sample from California, Austin and Corpus Christi

	Urban Acculturation	SES	Family Structure	Family Size	R	R^2
			CALIFORNIA			
Family	08	07	02	07	13	1.8
Community	22	04	-02	-06	22	5.1
Peers	20	09	02	-06	21	4.3
School	18	06	00	-04	18	3.2
E/C	17	02	-02	-05	17	2.9
SM	17	05	-04	00	19	3.5
Average	19	06	-01	-03	19	3.7
			AUSTIN			
Family	18	18	11	17	30	09
Community	27	21	12	15	36	13
Peers	25	16	21	06	30	09
School	30	24	09	-04	31	10
E/C	27	19	06	04	30	09
SM	16	17	07	13	26	07
Average	28	22	13	10	34	11
			CORPUS CHRISTI			
Family	32	25	07	-07	34	11
Community	33	30	10	-19	39	15
Peers	38	27	13	-01	39	15
School	39	29	13	-14	41	17
E/C	22	19	01	-22	32	10
SM	31	29	11	-14	35	12
Average	38	30	10	-13	40	16

TABLE 3

Intercorrelations of ABIC Social System Scale Scores for Spanish Surnamed Sample from California, Austin, and Corpus Christi

	Family	Community	Peers	School	E/C	SM	Avg.
			CALIFORNIA				
Community	.80						
Peers	.73	.73					
School	.78	.77	.73				
E/C	.77	.81	.68	.72			
SM	.82	.74	.73	.77	.76		
TOTAL	.88	.86	.79	.84	.83	.85	
				AUSTIN			
Family		.81	.66	.68	.73	.85	.89
Community	.75		.68	.76	.76	.75	.91
Peers	.72	.64		.70	.66	.66	.82
School	.71	.80	.66		.71	.73	.86
E/C	.69	.73	.51	.59		.77	.88
SM	.75	.65	.63	.63	.77		.89
Avg.	.90	.88	.83	.85	.79	.83	
		CORPUS CHRISTI					